

Faith ALIVE

April 30, 2023 + Fourth Sunday of Easter
Refugee Sunday

An asterisk * invites you to stand in body or in spirit, and you are invited to read aloud responses found in **bold**.

We welcome you to First Lutheran Church!

we GATHER

Prelude — “Title Goes Here”

Setting by _____

***Welcome and Litany for Refugees**

The ELCA defines refugees as “people who fled their home country due to persecution or fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinions or membership in a particular social group. Refugees typically stay in camps in a safer country before being resettled in a third country. The process usually takes years.”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Mighty God, as you guided the Israelites through the wilderness,

be a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day for refugees in search of new hope and new life.

As you brought the Israelites out of bondage to freedom,

bring refugees out of persecution to safety.

As you protected the Israelites through 40 years in the desert,

protect those who languish for years in refugee camps.

Wipe away their tears of sorrow,

that their mourning may give way to joyous hope.

Put an end to warfare and tyranny,

that some may return home without fear of violence.

Open the doors of safer nations,

that some may find new homes in new lands.

Rebuild their lives, **that they might enjoy the fruit of labors in peace.**

Restore their material goods,

that they might sustain their families in prosperity.

Revive their hope, **that they might face a future with promise.**

Shine your grace upon them, **that they might know your love.**

Strengthen their bonds of friendship and family,

that they might serve one another with encouraging love.

And inspire your churches to welcome the stranger,
that together we might build communities of hope where strangers become neighbors and friends, and siblings. Amen.

The fight for justice can be wearying. As Christians, we are called to work toward a lasting Shalom as we “see all people’s dignity” and strive to serve all of our neighbors.

***Gathering Hymn** — no. 726

“Light Dawns on a Weary World”

***Thanksgiving for Baptism**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, by whose hand we are given new birth, by whose speaking we are given new life. Amen.

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are welcomed, restored, and supported as citizens of the new creation.

Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Holy God, you are the river of life, you are the everlasting wellspring. In mercy and might you have freed us from death and raised us with Jesus, the firstborn of the dead. In baptismal waters our old life is washed away, and in them we are born anew.

Glory to you for oceans and lakes, for rivers and streams. Honor to you for waters that wash us clean, quench our thirst, and nurture both lands and creatures. Praise to you for the life-giving water of baptism, the outpouring of the Spirit of the new creation.

Wash away our sin and all that separates us from you. Empower our witness to your resurrection. Strengthen our resolve in seeking justice for all.

Satisfy the world’s need through this living water. Where drought dries the earth, bring refreshment. Where despair prevails, grant hope. Where chaos reigns, bring peace. We ask this through Christ, who with you and the Spirit reigns forever. **Amen.**

***Canticle of Praise** — page 140, front of hymnal, from ELW Setting Three

***Prayer of the Day**

May God be with you. **And also with you.** Let us pray.

O God our Shepherd, look with mercy upon people everywhere who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Guide us away from our complacency and help us to eliminate cruelty wherever it is found. Lead us to your vision, that everyone may enjoy a fair portion of the abundance of the earth. **Amen.**

Stewardship Story Sharing

David Marlow

we LISTEN and RESPOND

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles — Acts 2:42-47

[The baptized] devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and

but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Pastor Chris Culuris

*Hymn — no. 1062, from *All Creation Sings*

“Build a Longer Table”

We are encouraged by Christ the Shepherd to expand the flock, to build a longer table and invite all to know of God’s love. We serve Christ, who “breaks walls to pieces” and “tears down our fences” for lasting justice and peace.



1 Build a long - er ta - ble, not a high - er wall,
2 Build a saf - er ref - uge, not a larg - er jail;
3 Build a broad - er door - way, not a long - er fence.
4 When we lived as ex - iles, ref - u - gees a - broad,



feed - ing those who hun - ger, mak - ing room for all.
where the weak find shel - ter, mer - cy will not fail.
Love pro - tects all peo - ple, spar - ing no ex - pense.
Christ be - came our door - way to the reign of God.



Feast - ing to - geth - er, strang - er turns to friend,
For an - y place where jus - tice is de - nied,
When we em - brace com - pas - sion more than fear,
So must our ta - bles wel - come those who roam.



Christ breaks walls to piec - es; false di - vi - sions end.
Christ will breach the jail wall, free - ing all in - side.
Christ tears down our fenc - es: all are wel - come here.
None can be ex - clud - ed; all must find a home.

Blessing of Quilts

We invite the quilt makers forward to lay hands on these quilts during this blessing.

Blessed are you, O God, ruler of the universe. You made the whole earth for your glory; all creation praises you. We lift our voices to join the songs of heaven and earth in thanksgiving for the many blessings you have given us.

Renew in us the commitment to use our gifts in the service of others, and especially of those in need. Let us be your hands to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, comfort the weary and outcast, welcome the stranger, care for creation, and be loving neighbors to all people.

Bless these quilts. May those who receive them find dignity in their use and comfort in their warmth, and may these gifts be a sign of your love to all people.

To you, O God, be glory and honor through your Son, Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in your church and in the world, now and forever. Amen.

The ELCA defines asylum-seekers as “people forced to flee their homeland without access to the refugee resettlement process. To be eligible for asylum in the United States, such people must apply within one year of their arrival. Those who receive asylum are called asylees.”

In the composer’s notes, Hobby asks us to pay special attention to the actions: praying, singing, working. He further says, “may this arrangement serve as a reminder...of Christ’s call—a call to each of us to be good stewards of justice.”

*Prayers of Intercession

A: United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Source of life who is known by many names, we gather with gratitude for the earth and all who journey in it. **We give thanks for the interconnectedness of all creation.**

Source of justice who is known by many names, let us not swerve from the path of righteousness that leads to just and equitable relationships. **Open our eyes that we may see the immigrant and the undocumented alien, whose labor enables and sustains our living; the farm worker, the hotel worker, the line cook, the childcare provider, the health care worker.**

Give us the will to leave behind the safety of our sanctuaries to become your living sanctuary and claim our place in the movement to transform creation, **that our voice, our heart, our spirit will join the voice, heart and spirit of all who demand to live with respect, justice and peace.**

God the Good Shepherd, who has come to dwell among us, **open our ears to hear the cries of your children, children being separated from their parents, rounded up in raids, led to detention centers, silently giving up dreams.**

God of justice, who crosses all boundaries, give us courage to resist, to say NO to unfair labor practices, unjust laws, and policies. **Give us the strength to stand with and for your inclusive love, the faith to believe that another world is necessary and possible.**

Rejoicing in the joy of Christ’s resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Savior. **Amen.**

Offering

Music During Offering
“Song of Hope”

Setting by Robert A. Hobby

Bonse Aba Singers; **Brenda McHugh, piano**

*May the God of hope go with us every day, filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way, bringing light and hope to every land and race.*

*Praying, let us work for peace, singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that’s new, faithful when we hear Christ’s call.*

-Alvin Schutmaat

*Offering Prayer

A: Generous God, in this meal you offer your very self. We give thanks for these gifts of the earth. In the breaking of this bread reveal to us the Risen One. In the pouring of this wine pour us out in service to the world; through Christ our Savior. Amen.

we SHARE the meal

*Great Thanksgiving & Preface — page 144, front of hymnal, from ELW Setting Three

*“Holy, Holy, Holy” — page 144, front of hymnal, from ELW Setting Three

*Words of Institution and Prayers

P: In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Celebrating this meal in the joy of our risen Savior, we pray: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

*Invitation to the Table

P: Friends, this is the joyful feast of unity.
Christ has gathered his people around the earth to commune at this table.
Across political lines and economic lines,
in places of powerfully protected affluence,
and among the poorest of the poor, we share a meal,
remembering and celebrating the One who proved shalom possible.
And so, come: you from the East and you from the West,
from the North and from the South.

Come. Come with your doubts, come with your hopes,
come with your inadequacies and with your strengths.
Come, for this is a table where all are invited and all are welcome.

*We will receive
continuous
communion this
morning as we
sing this prayer,
asking for our
Savior to lead and
guide us. What
are you being led
to do as a
response to your
faith?*

Distribution of Communion

“Lamb of God” — page 146, front of hymnal, from ELW Setting Three

Hymn — no. 789

“Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”

Prayer After Communion

P: Gracious God, in you we live and move and have our being. With your word and this meal of grace, you have nourished our life together. Strengthen us to show your love and serve the world in Jesus' name. Amen.

we DEPART to serve the world

Announcements

***Sending Hymn** —

“Abraham Journeyed to a New Country”
Sung to the tune BUNESSAN

*All: Abraham journeyed to a new country;
Sarah went with him, journeying too.
Slaves down in Egypt fled Pharaoh's army;
Ruth left the home and people she knew.*

There are many biblical examples of refugees and immigrants. We pray: Shepherd and guide us to “reach out and offer a welcome” to all people we encounter, especially those in need.

High Voices: Mary and Joseph feared Herod's order;
Soldiers were coming! They had to flee.
Taking young Jesus, they crossed the border;
So was our Christ a young refugee.

All: Some heard the promise — God's hand would bless them!
Some fled from hunger, famine and pain.
Some left a place where others oppressed them;
All trusted God and started again.

Low Voices: Did they know hardship? Did they know danger?
Who shared a home or gave them some bread?
Who reached a hand to welcome the stranger?
Who saw their fear and gave hope instead?

All: God, our own families came here from far lands;
We have been strangers, "aliens" too.
May we reach out and offer a welcome
As we have all been welcomed by you.

***Sending Litany**

A: Accompany us, God, through the waiting.
Accompany those displaced waiting to return to the land.
Accompany those in refugee camps waiting to go home.
Accompany those in conflict zones waiting for normality.
Accompany those in violent homes waiting for silence.
Accompany those imprisoned waiting for justice.
Accompany us, God, through the waiting
Amen.

***Blessing & Dismissal**

P: Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**
The God of all, who raised ☩ Jesus from the dead,
bless you by the power of the Holy Spirit to live in the new creation. Amen.
A: Go in peace. Serve the Risen One. **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

***Postlude** — “Title Goes Here”

Setting by _____

Acknowledgements

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“Litany for Refugees” from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, www.lirs.org, printed in Canadian Lutheran World Relief, Worship Resources for World Refugee Day <https://www.clwr.org/sites/default/files/documents/WRD%20Worship%20Resources%202015%20FINAL.pdf>

“Prayers of Intercession” adapted from *Bible Study on Refugees and Migrants* from the ELCA. <https://tinyurl.com/5otkcvbg>

“Invitation to Communion” from 2010 World Communion Day,

<https://www.claudiocarvalhoes.com/liturgies-2/2010-world-communion-day-worship-resource-pcusa/>

“Sending Litany” from *Bible Studies for Advent 2013*, <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/Advent-2013-bible-studies.pdf>

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Worship Assistants

Pastor: Chris Culuris
Director of Music: Emily Bruflat
Assisting Minister: Sharon Malm
Audio/Video: Rachel Ribar, Finley Olson

Greeter: Mary Spear
Reader: Mary Spear
Ushers: Lathe Bly, Laird Bly, Jacob Little
Musicians: Bonse Aba Singers

Communion Preparers: Kelly Harrell
Communion Servers: Nancy Timm, Sharon Domeier,
Mary Spear
Bread Bakers:
Acolytes: Charlotte Loken, Avery Locken, Colton
Loken

Announcements

- Please join us for our First Forum today following worship. Our topic is FLC's Strategic Plan Framework 2023-2028.
- The Scouts are serving a Pancake Breakfast until noon today in the Dining Hall.
- Join us as FLC's choir goes on the road to the Benedictine nursing home. They will sing well loved hymns from 11:30 - 12:30 pm today.

Prayers

- Flowers for the Altar are given today by Dave Pehrson and family in memory of Doreen Pehrson.